United Nations A/CN.10/PV.355

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

355th meeting

Monday, 4 April 2016, 10 a.m.

New York

Chair: Mr. Tevi ..... (Vanuatu)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Opening of the session

The Chair: I declare open the 2016 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

I would like to inform everyone that Mr. Kim Won-soo, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, is on his way here and will be joining us soon. We will hear his statement to the Commission later on. For the time being, I would now like to offer some thoughts on the work ahead from the Chair's perspective.

The Disarmament Commission is beginning its work this year in a very challenging international environment. There are growing tensions in many parts of the world. Disagreements and rivalries persist among States. Deadly conflicts continue unabated in various regions. Threats of terrorism and cyberattacks add to instability and insecurity throughout our planet. In the shadow of such a security climate, multilateral disarmament has continued to face serious challenges, with increasing signs of decay and decline. Lacking mutual trust and confidence, States are retreating from disarmament negotiations. The 2015 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons concluded without agreement on a substantive outcome document. Last fall, the First Committee held its most recent session in a highly polarized atmosphere, with many resolutions adopted by deeply divided votes.

In that context, the Disarmament Commission has a critical role to play this year in restoring trust among States and rebuilding confidence in multilateral disarmament. The disarmament machinery provides a mechanism for promoting dialogue and building confidence among States. As the specialized deliberative subsidiary body of the disarmament machinery with universal membership, the Disarmament Commission enables in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues. Through such deliberations, member States can engage in constructive dialogue and free-wheeling discussions, with a view to finding common ground for advancing the disarmament agenda.

Fortunately, the 2016 Disarmament Commission begins its work on the heels of the first substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. I was heartened that the Working Group held very productive discussions in a constructive atmosphere. The active participation of many delegations during the week-long meeting has not only raised expectations for the prospects for agreement on a possible fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, but has also created some much-needed positive energy in the area of disarmament. I sincerely hope that this constructive atmosphere will also prevail in our work in the coming three weeks and create momentum for revitalizing the work of the Commission, as well as that of the disarmament machinery as a whole.

It has become a cliché that the disarmament machinery, particularly the Conference on Disarmament

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and the Disarmament Commission, is perpetually paralysed. It has been 20 years since the Conference on Disarmament last negotiated a multilateral treaty. It has been 17 years since the Disarmament Commission last adopted guidelines or recommendations. However, I wish to remind the Commission that during the period from 1979 to 1999, the Commission adopted, by consensus, guidelines and recommendations on various disarmament issues 16 times. That is why I am convinced that the Disarmament Commission will be able to agree on substantive outcomes during the current three-year cycle. So I wish all members the very best as they commence their work toward this goal. I earnestly hope that we will have a turning point for multilateral disarmament soon.

I shall now take up the provisional agenda for the 2016 substantive session. Members of the Commission may recall that, at its organizational session on 19 January (see A/CN.10/PV.354), the Commission took note of the provisional agenda for the 2016 substantive session as contained in document A/CN.10/L.76.

Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the agenda as contained in document A/CN.10/L.76.

The agenda was adopted.

Election of other officers

The Chair: As members will recall, the Commission has yet to elect Vice-Chairs and a Rapporteur from regional groups.

I have been informed that consultations are still ongoing within the Group of African States, the Group of Asia and Pacific States, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of Western European and other States on possible candidates for the posts of Vice-Chairs, and we will take up the election of Vice-Chairs from these Groups at a later stage.

At the same time, I am pleased to inform the Commission of the following endorsement received. The Group of Eastern European States has endorsed Mr. Tigran Samvelian, Counsellor, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Armenia, as Vice-Chair from the Group of Eastern European States.

If I hear no objection, I will take it that the Commission wishes to elect Mr. Tigran Samvelian as Vice-Chair of the Commission of the 2016 substantive session by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chair: Allow me, on behalf of the Commission, to warmly congratulate the newly elected member of the Bureau and to wish him success in discharging his duties. I am sure that he will make an important contribution to the smooth work of the Commission this year. On a more personal note, I would like to mention that I shall count on his support and counsel.

I have also been informed that His Excellency Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan, and Mr. Bouchaib Eloumni, Minister Plenipotentiary at the Permanent Mission of Morocco, have expressed their interest in continuing to chair Working Group 1 and Working Group 2, respectively.

May I take it that the Commission takes note of the fact that His Excellency Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan, and Mr. Bouchaib Eloumni, Minister Plenipotentiary at the Permanent Mission of Morocco, will continue to chair Working Group 1 and Working Group 2, respectively?

It was so decided.

Organization of work

The Chair: I would now like to bring to the attention of the members of the Commission the schedule of meetings contained in document A/CN.10/2016/CRP.1, which has been disseminated in the room.

May I take it that the Commission wishes to take note of the schedule of meetings as contained in document A/CN.10/2016/CRP.1?

It was so decided.

The Chair: Before we take up the first order of the day, allow me, on behalf of all members of the Commission, to extend a warm welcome to Mr. Kim Won-soo, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, who will provide substantive support to the session of the Commission. His presence here today underlines the importance of the Commission in general and the high expectations of Member States for this session in particular.

It gives me great pleasure to give the floor to Mr. Kim Won-soo.

Mr. Kim Won-soo: I want to bring to the Disarmament Commission the greetings of the

Secretary-General. I also wish to congratulate Ambassador Tevi on his appointment as Chair and thank him for inviting me to address the Commission at its opening session. I believe that Member States will give him very strong and complete support.

Secondly, I also want to thank the outgoing Chair, Ambassador Seck, for his excellent leadership in 2015.

Finally, I also wish to express my gratitude to the Chairs of the Commission's two Working Groups, Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov of Kazakhstan and Ambassador Bouchaib Eloumni of Morocco, for their tireless work in 2015.

The Disarmament Commission is entering the middle phase of its current cycle during a time of deepening paralysis and divisions within multilateral disarmament bodies. These disappointments are well known to us all, from the 2015 NPT Review Conference, our inability to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force and the lack of any further negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament. Against this backdrop, it is no wonder that many have looked outside traditional United Nations forums for progress. Yet the Commission has considerable potential to demonstrate again that the existing disarmament machinery can produce results.

Now I would like to speak about the two agenda items the Commission has been working on. The first is the item on conventional weapons. In recent cycles, the Commission has made important progress towards consensus on its conventional weapons item. This has come as the international community has made important strides forward on this part of the disarmament agenda. These have included the first-ever legally binding regulations governing the international arms trade, greater success at combating the illicit trade in small arms, dealing with the problems posed by excess and poorly maintained stocks of ammunition, as well as agreeing to tackle new challenges such as the threat posed by improvised explosive devices. We have also continuously made progress in the improvement of its confidence-building mechanisms in the field of conventional arms control, including the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures. I hope the continued deliberations by the Commission on its conventional arms item builds upon and consolidates these gains. The time has come for the Commission to start finally bringing its consideration of this item to a successful conclusion.

Secondly, on the matter of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, however, the gap remains wide. Over the past 11 months, views on the way forward have grown increasingly polarized and entrenched. Work will resume next month in Geneva on the elaboration of effective legal measures for nuclear disarmament. Even as that process continues, the Disarmament Commission still maintains a unique and distinct role, especially in the light of its history of consensus-building. In this regard, I encourage representatives to make use of the unique nature of this body as a deliberative and consensus-based body that continues to enjoy universal participation. This dynamic should enable them to pursue constructive dialogue involving all key stakeholders. It should also be aimed at bringing us back to a common vision on how to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

I would now like to move on to a possible third agenda item. The need for simultaneous progress on multiple questions of disarmament has never been more apparent. We are faced by the rapid emergence of new trends and technologies that are complicating strategic relationships and stability. This includes the development of advanced new types of strategic weapons. It also includes a growing nexus between terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and cyberthreats.

Areas where the United Nations has recently made progress include addressing the challenges of outer space security and sustainability and clarifying how international norms pertaining to hostile and malicious acts apply to cyberspace. Of these, the issue of outer space is especially ripe for consideration in a universal body. In 2012, on the initiative of the Russian Federation, the General Assembly established a Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities. That Group successfully concluded its work in 2013. The General Assembly subsequently referred its report to the Conference on Disarmament, the Commission and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in its resolution 68/50, which, in a demonstration of unity on matters of strategic security, China, the Russian Federation and the United States jointly sponsored.

In October 2015, the First and Fourth Committees held their first-ever joint ad hoc meeting on addressing

the challenges of outer space security and sustainability (see A/C.1/70/PV.13). The meeting proved useful but ultimately revealed that further dialogue was necessary in order to reconcile the contending visions for outer space security.

The Disarmament Commission has clear authority to adopt a third agenda item at any point during its cycle, provided there is consensus. Furthermore, it has a mandate to consider such an item during its present cycle, under the terms of resolution 69/77, in paragraph 5 of which the Assembly "recommends that the Disarmament Commission intensify consultations with a view to reaching agreement on the items on its agenda ... keeping in mind the proposal to include a third agenda item". Finally, resolution 70/68, adopted in 2015, explicitly provides for the continuation of these consultations in the context of the agenda of the Disarmament Commission.

We appreciate the efforts made by the Chair to explore common ground so that agreements on a third agenda item, possibly addressing outer space, can be achieved. Deliberations by the Commission on this issue may help to consolidate and carry forward various proposals to ensure that space remains free from conflict and unsustainable practices.

Taking up a third agenda item should not and will not detract from the Commission's work on its two existing items. Rather, it would bring the Committee back to greater productivity, thereby restoring its credibility as an essential component of the United Nations disarmament machinery.

I hope that representatives are able to make use of this session to be innovative, break out of siloed ways of operating and demonstrate the ability of the Disarmament Commission to achieve tangible and practical results. The Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to assist representatives in any way possible.

I wish the Commission all the best for a successful substantive session.

The Chair: I thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for his statement.

General debate

The Commission will now start the general exchange of views, based on the list of speakers inscribed for the general debate. I would ask those delegations that have not yet done so to inscribe their names on the list as soon as possible, as we plan to conclude the general debate tomorrow at 1 p.m. In order to maximize the time available to us during the general exchange of views segment, I propose that we maintain the practice of using a rolling list of speakers, which is currently open to all delegations wishing to take the floor. I would also like to remind all delegations that have already inscribed their names on the list to keep in mind that the rolling list implies that they should be prepared to intervene at any time, possibly even sooner than they had originally planned to speak. I would also like to remind delegations that we will follow the established format for the length of statements, that is, 15 minutes for delegations speaking on behalf of groups and 10 minutes for delegations making statements in their national capacity.

Mr. Anshor (Indonesia): I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM). I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to chair this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. I also express my appreciation to the Chairs of the Working Groups for their efforts. NAM assures you of its full cooperation in what it hopes will be a productive session with positive outcomes.

NAM underscores its long-standing position regarding the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, and expresses its determination to promote multilateralism as the core principle of negotiation in those areas. In that regard, the Movement reaffirms the relevance and centrality of the United Nations Disarmament Committee (UNDC), with universal membership, as the sole specialized and deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery mandated to consider specific disarmament issues and submit concrete recommendations to the General Assembly.

The Movement reiterates its willingness to continue working to revitalize the disarmament machinery in order for it to fulfil its mandate. In that regard, NAM considers that the Conference on Disarmament remains the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, and the Disarmament Commission remains the specialized deliberative body mandated to submit concrete recommendations to the General Assembly.

The UNDC has contributed in the past to the field of disarmament and arms control by adopting 16 guidelines, recommendations and declarations. NAM

expresses its concern at the fact that the UNDC has been unable to agree to substantive recommendations on its agenda items since 2000 due to the lack of political will and inflexible positions of the nuclear-weapon States. NAM stresses the urgent need to achieve concrete results in the current UNDC cycle and, to that end, urges all Member States, in particular nuclear-weapon States, to show the required political will and flexibility. The Movement stands ready to cooperate actively and constructively with all parties in order to reach an agreement on substantive recommendations on the agenda items of the Commission.

NAM reiterates its deep concern over the lack of progress in the implementation of nuclear-disarmament obligations and commitments by the nuclear-weapon States. NAM strongly calls upon them to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, in accordance with their relevant multilateral legal obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), made during the Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the unequivocal undertaking that they provided at the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences. NAM reiterates the continued validity of those obligations and commitments until they are fulfilled.

NAM stresses that progress on nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects is essential in strengthening international peace and security. In that context, the Movement stresses that nuclear disarmament, as the highest priority established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and as a multilateral legal obligation, should not be made conditional on confidence-building measures, non-proliferation efforts or so-called strategic stability.

The Movement underlines that General Assembly resolution 70/34, entitled "Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament", provides a concrete road map to achieve the objective of nuclear disarmament.

NAM reiterates that the United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament, to be convened no later than 2018, as decided through General Assembly resolutions, would indeed provide the Assembly with an opportunity to review the progress made in nuclear disarmament and to make concrete recommendations in order to maintain the momentum created by the 2013 High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament and to intensify international efforts towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. NAM stresses the need to establish a preparatory committee for the United Nations high-level international conference in New York.

NAM stresses the importance of enhancing public awareness about the threat posed to humanity by nuclear weapons and the necessity of their total elimination through observing 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

NAM welcomes the continued consideration of the humanitarian initiative and reiterates its deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, and, in that context, reaffirms the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law, and reaffirms that any use of nuclear weapons would be a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and a crime against humanity, as declared in numerous General Assembly resolutions.

NAM emphasizes that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and, pending that, all non-nuclear-weapon States should be provided, as a matter of high priority, with universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding security assurances by all nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under all circumstances.

The Movement underlines that all activities and plans related to improving existing nuclear weapons and developing new types of nuclear weapons contradict the objective of achieving nuclear disarmament as a multilateral legal obligation, as well as the commitments undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States in that regard.

NAM reaffirms the importance of the application by nuclear-weapon States of the principles of transparency, irreversibility and international verifiability in all measures related to the fulfilment of their nuclear-disarmament obligations and undertakings.

The Movement underlines the importance of the full realization of the inalienable right of developing countries to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy, including the sovereign right to develop the full national nuclear fuel cycle, for peaceful purposes without discrimination and to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials

and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

NAM again stresses that proliferation concerns are best addressed through multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements. Non-proliferation-control arrangements should be transparent and open to participation by all States and should not impose restrictions on access to the material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes required by developing countries.

The Movement stresses that issues related to proliferation should be resolved through political and diplomatic means. Measures and initiatives taken in that regard should be within the framework of international law and should contribute to the promotion of international peace and security.

NAM States parties to the NPT regret the failure of the ninth Review Conference to reach consensus on a final document despite the efforts made by NAM delegations. That failure should serve as a stimulus to work harder towards achieving nuclear disarmament, the ultimate objective of the NPT. NAM States parties to the NPT stress the importance of fulfilling the commitments made at the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences and of implementing the action plans adopted by the 2010 Review Conference on nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

NAM States parties to the NPT further underline that the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which is an integral and essential part of the package of decisions reached without a vote that enabled the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995, should be implemented without any further delay, and reaffirms that the resolution remains valid until its objectives are achieved.

NAM States parties to the NPT express their profound disappointment at the fact that the conference scheduled for 2012 on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East was not convened despite the consensus decision of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. That runs contrary to the letter and spirit of the 1995 resolution and violates the collective agreement reached at the 2010 Review Conference. NAM States parties to the NPT stress that the commitments and obligations of the Treaty depositories regarding the Zone, as contained in the 1995 resolution and the 2010 Action Plan on the Middle East, remain valid until fulfilled. They strongly reject the impediments alleged by the conveners of the conference to have resulted in its failure to have been convened on schedule.

In that context, NAM States parties to the NPT deplore the fact that Israel is the only party in the Middle East that has rejected participation in the conference, as mandated at the 2010 Review Conference. NAM States parties to the NPT call for the full and immediate implementation of the 1995 resolution and the 2010 Action Plan on the Middle East so as to avoid negative repercussions on the effectiveness and credibility of the NPT, its 2015 review process and the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime as a whole.

In that regard, NAM recalls that in the final document of the Tehran Summit of August 2012, the Heads of State and Government, while strongly supporting the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, called upon all parties concerned to take urgent and practical steps for the establishment of such a zone. Pending the establishment of such a zone, they further demanded that Israel, the only country in the region to have neither joined the NPT nor declared its intention to do so, renounce its possession of nuclear weapons, accede to the NPT without preconditions or further delay, promptly place all of its nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency full-scope safeguards and conduct its nuclear-related activities in conformity with the non-proliferation regime. They expressed great concern about the acquisition of nuclear capability by Israel, which poses a serious and ongoing threat to the security of neighbouring and other States, and condemned Israel for continuing to develop and stockpile nuclear arsenals. They called for the total and complete prohibition of all nuclear-related equipment, information, material and facilities, resources or devices and the extension of assistance in the nuclear-related, scientific or technological fields to Israel.

NAM underscores the need for strong and genuine political will in support of the multilateral disarmament machinery, in particular negotiations during the Conference on Disarmament, which remains the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body. NAM encourages the Conference on Disarmament to agree as soon as possible on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work in order to overcome its long-standing deadlock and start its substantive work.

In conclusion, the Movement underscores its full support for the Commission's work, which must be intensified through reinvigorated political will with a view to achieving meaningful outcomes to advance global disarmament and non-proliferation.

NAM attaches great importance to the agenda item on "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons". As a contribution to the work of the Disarmament Commission, it will submit a working paper under that item.

Mr. Elshandawily (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the Arab Group would like to express its sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) this year. Likewise, we express our sincere appreciation to and commend both the Kingdom of Morocco and the Republic of Kazakhstan for presiding over the two Working Groups of the Commission.

The Arab Group reiterates the centrality of the Disarmament Commission as a United Nations forum based on consensus. It aims to discuss disarmament issues in the light of the mandate authorized and defined by the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, held in 1978.

The Group underlines that entrenching peace, security and stability worldwide is inconceivable in view of the presence of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, which pose an ongoing threat. It is thus imperative to save humanity from those weapons. We must harness the ample specialized human and financial potential dedicated to such weapons for development instead.

The Group expresses its concern over the continued failure to achieve any tangible progress in nuclear disarmament. We are concerned about the repeated failure to commit to implementing the second decision of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as well as the 13 practical steps towards nuclear disarmament agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, in addition to the Action Plan adopted at the 2010 Review Conference.

In that context, the nuclear-weapon States are clearly reluctant to set any specific time frame for the implementation of their international obligations in the area of the the complete eradication and dismantling of nuclear weapons.

In that light, and given the failure to implement the consensus resolution of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the Arab Group attempted, at last year's Review Conference, to break the stalemate through a new proposition, submitted as part of the Arab paper and also supported by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. However, it did not achieve the desired objective.

A very disappointing decision was made by three countries, including two nuclear-weapon States — Treaty depositary States — that created impediments to the desired outcome. That in turn raises questions as to the determination of those countries to abide by the Treaty and respect their obligations in that context.

We therefore stress that freeing the Middle East from weapons of mass destruction is a global responsibility of which the Arab Group has assumed its share. What remains is the responsibility of other parties. Without that, the credibility of the NPT would be at stake, and the stability of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime would be threatened. Therefore, the States members of the League of Arab States have decided to undertake a comprehensive review of the relevant stances and develop an Arab strategy towards a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, with the aim of maintaining regional security.

Moreover, the recent ministerial meeting of the League of Arab States, held on 11 March, established a Committee of Wise Men tasked with reviewing all Arab policies related to the regulation of armaments, nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. It will also submit an inclusive report containing an honest evaluation as well as recommendations and proposals on new policies aimed at achieving the Arab objectives while maintaining regional security, given the new changes and emerging threats.

The failure of the recent Review Conference and procrastination on the part of the nuclear States in fulfilling their obligations in the area of non-proliferation makes it incumbent on us, as members of the international community, to take greater strides and redouble our efforts towards the full eradication of nuclear weapons.

The Arab States will continue to positively contribute within the framework of all international efforts towards nuclear non-proliferation, by way of ongoing and effective participation in all multilateral forums on nuclear disarmament, including, recently, the open-ended working group that met in Geneva with the aim of achieving effective legal instruments to bring about a world free of weapons of mass destruction.

All of the Arab States Members of the United Nations have acceded to the NPT. They have subjected all nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards system, a step that Israel has not undertaken to date, despite all relevant international demands and resolutions.

In that context, the Arab States underline that the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction is considered the fourth pillar of the NPT, with the same weight as the other three pillars of the Treaty. We have not seen any tangible progress in this framework since 1995, despite the fact that the decision to indefinitely extend the NPT, adopted that same year, was based on that idea.

Voluntary practical measures to build trust can contribute to promoting peace and security at both the national and international levels. In that context, the Arab countries recall the guidelines on appropriate confidence-building measures and the means of their regional and international implementation, which were recommended by the UNDC and adopted by the General Assembly in 1996.

In that context, the Arab Group stresses that eradicating weapons of mass destruction worldwide is one of the most important confidence-building measures, thus the importance of implementing the decision of the 1995 NPT Review Conference declaring the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Fulfilling the international commitments agreed to voluntarily by countries would contribute to promoting trust among countries. Likewise, the Group stresses the vital importance of implementing the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and enhancing the capabilities of States to combat that very dangerous phenomenon, which poses a worldwide threat. We stress the vital role played by the International Tracing Instrument aimed at regulating the movement and acquisition of such weapons.

The Arab Group hopes that this year's session of the Commission will result in comprehensive, consensus-based documents reminiscent of the positive outcomes achieved in 1998 and 1999.

Mr. Nduhuura (Uganda): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group. The African Group congratulates you, Sir, on your election as Chair of this session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). The African Group seizes this opportunity to congratulate other members of the Bureau on their election and expresses appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Fodé Seck of Senegal, for his hard work as Chair of the 2015 substantive session. The Group appreciates the efforts made by the Chairs of the two Working Groups and looks forward to working with them during this session. The Group also expresses its appreciation to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Kim Won-soo, for his thoughtful remarks.

I wish to inform the Commission that the African Group has nominated Mr. Bouchaib Eloumni of Morocco as Vice-Chair, to represent the Group in the Bureau. The African Group will inform the Chair when the nomination of the Rapporteur has been completed.

The African Group aligns itself with the statement by the Non-Aligned Movement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia. The Group expresses its continued commitment to the principle and validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and underlines that disarmament and proliferation issues are best addressed through multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements.

As stressed by former Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, the long-term reason for the necessity of multilateral disarmament is the need for the United Nations to effectively play its primary role of ensuring peace, security and the survival of organized life on our planet, for there is a continued risk of the total destruction of life and human civilization as long as nuclear weapons exist.

In view of that, the African Group wishes to underscore the importance and relevance of the UNDC as the sole specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery.

In the past, the UNDC has measurably contributed to deliberations on nuclear disarmament as the highest global priority, as well as on issues related to nuclear non-proliferation, including the adoption of guidelines, recommendations and declarations. The Group regrets, however, that the UNDC has not been able to achieve a substantial outcome that would have led to the first concrete recommendations in more than a decade, owing to the lack of political will and to inflexible positions.

The African Group reiterates its call for concerted efforts to address the threat of nuclear weapons and their total elimination as the end goal of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Group reaffirms the need for the application of the principles of transparency, irreversibility and verifiability by nuclear-weapon States in relation to nuclear-disarmament measures. That principle remains essential to promoting the fulfilment of the obligations set out in article VI of the NPT, in consonance with the relevant multilateral legal obligations.

The Group again stresses the need to universalize the Treaty and to ensure compliance, in a balanced and comprehensive manner, with each of its three pillars of disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. It further stresses the inalienable right of States to development, research, production and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy without discrimination and in conformity with article IV of the NPT.

This year marks the forty-sixth anniversary of the entry into force of the NPT. In that regard, the African Group deplores the inability to achieve consensus on a final outcome document of its ninth Review Conference in 2015. That setback represents a missed opportunity for States parties to strengthen the Treaty by truly reinforcing its three pillars of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The Group believes that the total elimination of nuclear weapons and a legally binding assurance that they will never be produced again remain the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The Group further wishes to affirm that, pending the conclusion of such assurances, all non-nuclear-weapon States should be provided with legal assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons by nuclear-weapon States.

The African Group continues to stress that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones constitutes an important milestone towards achieving nuclear-disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. In that respect, one of Africa's major contributions was the entry into force of the Pelindaba Treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, on 15 July 2009.

The Group reiterates that the entry into force of the Treaty restates the continent of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. The Group further seizes this opportunity to encourage the States that have yet to ratify it, particularly the States contemplated in Protocol III, to take all necessary measures to ensure its speedy application. The Group believes that such action will significantly enhance the status of the Treaty and contribute to efforts to replicate this measure in the remaining parts of the world.

The Group unequivocally supports the call for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. It continues to express deep dissatisfaction at the failure to implement, as agreed, the commitments and obligations relative to the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and the Action Plan adopted at the 2010 NPT Review Conference regarding the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. It expresses, in clear terms, its strong disappointment at the fact that the conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, which should have been held in 2012, was not convened as mandated. In that regard, the commitments and obligations relative to the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which remains an integral and essential part of the package and the basis upon which consensus was reached on the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995, as well as related measures of the 2010 Action Plan, remain valid until the establishment of such a zone.

The African Group wishes to highlight the goal of General Assembly resolution 70/34, entitled "Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament", as an integral part of the overall objective of a nuclear-free world and calls for its effective implementation. The Group reiterates the need for a high-level international conference to be convened no later than 2018. The Group believes that such a conference would serve as an opportunity for the General Assembly to make concrete recommendations, with a view to maintaining the momentum of the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly, as well

as intensify international efforts to ensure a nuclear-free world.

In view of the nineteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), in September 2015, the African Group wishes to highlight the importance of achieving universal adherence to that instrument, bearing in mind the special responsibilities of nuclear-weapon States in that regard, and to encourage the remaining annex II States, in particular nuclear-weapon States, to sign and ratify the CTBT without further delay in order to ensure its entry into force.

Nuclear weapons remain the only weapons of mass destruction yet to be prohibited. They remain a present and existential threat to humankind, and their use constitutes a violation of the Charter of the United Nations, the norms of human civilization and a crime against humanity. The Group considers any doctrine justifying their use or threat of use as unacceptable and unjustifiable. It further recalls the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice that affirms that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law (see A/51/218, annex).

In that context, the Group reiterates its grave concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. It further reaffirms that any use of nuclear weapons would be a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and a crime against humanity, and calls on all States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to consider such catastrophic consequences for humankind.

The African Group reaffirms the importance of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), not only as the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament issues, but one that should work to break the impasse in nuclear-disarmament negotiations. The Group reiterates its call with respect to the urgent need for the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work. In that regard, the Group welcomes the efforts made by the CD in 2014, as highlighted in its final report to the General Assembly (A/69/27). The Group calls on the CD to work towards the realization of the objectives for its establishment in its negotiations.

Regarding the issue of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, the Group wishes to underline that, in pursuit of the objective to contribute to international peace and security, such measures should be undertaken in full conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

The African Group wishes to further stress that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to threaten peace and stability in many countries and regions, particularly in Africa. The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons remains a source of supply for terrorist groups, fuels organized crime and remains an ongoing and major concern to the States members of the Group.

Having entered into force as a legally binding instrument on the transfer of conventional arms among its States parties, the Arms Trade Treaty provides an opportunity to address some of the challenges of the unregulated transfer of conventional weapons. The Group recognizes and reaffirms the sovereign right of all States to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms, their parts and components for their self-defence and security needs, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The Group reiterates the call for its implementation in a balanced and objective manner that protects the interests of all States, not just the major international producing and exporting States, and urges all major arms suppliers to accede to the Treaty without further delay.

The Group looks forward to actively participate in the upcoming Sixth Biennial Meeting of States on the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, as a follow-up to the Fifth Meeting, held in 2014, and the Meeting of Governmental Experts held in 2015. The African Group continues to emphasize the importance of the balanced, full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action. In that regard, the Group identifies the strengthening of the tools of international cooperation and assistance as essential ingredients that must be addressed in order to ensure the full implementation of the Programme.

The African Group continues to highlight the efforts made by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, in the context of its contributions to disarmament issues and in providing the requisite assistance to the States members of the African Group in the implementation of efforts related to disarmament, peace and security issues. The Group wishes to stress the need to further strengthen all

United Nations regional centres for disarmament in order to fully discharge their mandates in that regard.

Finally, the Group once again regrets that the Disarmament Commission was not able to make concrete recommendations or reach a consensus during its three previous cycles. The African Group wishes to restate the critical importance of political will and transparency in addressing international disarmament and security issues. The Group appeals for a sustained, meaningful dialogue as we begin deliberations on major issues, and looks forward to concrete suggestions towards achieving peace and security for all.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the Disarmament Commission. I assure you and the Disarmament Commission's Bureau of our full support and cooperation.

The international security situation today is in a state of great flux, marked by multiplying conflicts and tensions among and within States. Even as old disputes remain unresolved and, at best, frozen, there are worrying indications of new cold wars in Europe and Asia and growing turmoil in the Middle East. Meanwhile, in my region, South Asia, real progress towards peace and prosperity is being impeded by hegemonic impulses that are often fanned and encouraged by powerful States from beyond the region to advance their own geopolitical objectives.

Those larger trends are impacting the disarmament regime and structures. The global consensus that the General Assembly developed 38 years ago to promote the disarmament agenda has eroded. There are continuing differences in approaches to pursue an agreed disarmament agenda. The challenges facing the disarmament machinery are not exclusive to the Commission or to the First Committee. Other parts of the arms-control machinery are also not immune to those problems. The failure of last year's Review Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the continuing deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament on all its core issues are indicative of that gloomy picture.

There are new dangers on the global security horizon in areas such as the hostile use of outer space, offensive cybercapabilities, the development and use of lethal autonomous weapon systems and armed drones, as well as the development of advanced conventional hypersonic systems of global reach.

Efforts to regulate nuclear weapons through legal, normative and political means have not matched our expectations. Despite reductions in the number of nuclear weapons since the end of the Cold War, the pace has been slow and the scale modest. Advancement towards multilateral nuclear disarmament is being resisted by a handful of nuclear-weapon States. Those States are willing to give up neither their large inventories of nuclear weapons nor their modernization programmes, yet they continue to advocate that for others. This doublespeak has only aggravated the sense of insecurity among other nations. Instead of fulfilling their legal disarmament obligations, those States have almost exclusively pursued non-proliferation with messianic zeal. That gap between legality and reality has eroded the global faith in the mutually reinforcing nature of those processes.

Close to 30 States parties to the NPT that are members of nuclear armed alliances continue to rely robustly on nuclear weapons, some of them even housing tactical nuclear weapons on their territories. As such, those States indirectly and implicitly encourage the possession or even use of nuclear weapons as part of the strategic doctrines of their alliances. Even as those States enjoy a nuclear umbrella, they call on others to eschew the means to defend themselves in the face of real and often growing security threats. Some of those States have also concluded discriminatory nuclear-cooperation agreements and helped grant waivers, in an unfortunate departure from long-held non-proliferation principles.

Double standards are also evident in the area of conventional arms. While professing strict adherence to responsible arms transfers, some of those States continue to supply an increasing number of conventional weapons in our region, thereby aggravating instability in South Asia. Those policies and actions are obviously driven by self-serving strategic, political and commercial considerations. It remains a grim irony that weapons, which and sustain conflicts, come from areas or regions that themselves enjoy peace. Only four countries account for two thirds of global arms exports, while major importers are developing countries, mainly in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. Not surprisingly, these double standards have engendered a wide sense of dismay and disappointment in the international community, including in my own country. Many therefore see advocacy by those States for a world free

of nuclear weapons and for high standards in arms transfers as hollow rhetoric.

Progress towards nuclear disarmament is also being delayed and hindered by some who wish to divert the Conference on Disarmament's focus to partial non-proliferation measures, such as a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). A treaty that is discriminatory in nature and does not address the existing stockpiles of fissile material would impinge on the security of some States while being cost-free for those with the largest amounts of fissile stocks.

Claims by some delegations that an FMCT would put a quantitative cap on nuclear weapons are false. The reasons are self-evident. It is because the vast stockpiles of fissile material, coupled with the continued unsafeguarded production for civilian and non-explosive military purposes, provide a ready reserve of fissile material that can be weaponized at will. There is no provision in the treaty favoured by those States that would constrain a quantitative or qualitative increase in nuclear weapons. Pakistan therefore cannot support an unequal treaty that has direct implications for our national security.

My country is a responsible nuclear State. Our nuclear policy is shaped by the evolving security dynamics in South Asia. Our nuclear capability is geared towards ensuring our security and self-defence, based on credible minimum deterrence. As my Prime Minister, Mr. Nawaz Sharif, told the General Assembly last year,

> "Pakistan neither wants, nor is it engaged in, an arms race in South Asia. However, we cannot remain oblivious to the evolving security dynamics and arms build-up in our region, which obliges us to take essential steps to maintain our security" (*see A/70/PV.19, p. 41*).

The Prime Minister further underscored that

> "South Asia needs strategic stability, and this requires serious dialogue to achieve nuclear restraint, conventional balance and conflict resolution" (*ibid.*)

Pakistan has consistently supported the goals of nuclear disarmament and a nuclear-weapon-free world. Those objectives need to be pursued through the conclusion of a universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear-weapons convention in the CD.

Pakistan shares the concerns and anxieties associated with the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. We have therefore participated in and contributed to that discourse during all three conferences on the subject. We also understand and share the sense of frustration among non-nuclear-weapon States over the slow pace of nuclear-disarmament obligations by nuclear-weapon States.

At the same time, my country believes that the subject of nuclear weapons, while relevant and important, cannot be exclusively reduced to a humanitarian paradigm. It is important to recognize the context and motivation of each State that possesses such weapons. In the case of Pakistan, our security was seriously challenged by the introduction of nuclear weapons into our region. We were left with no option but to acquire a credible nuclear-deterrent capability to respond to this and defend ourselves.

Several regions of the world have benefited from the application of principles, guidelines and confidence-building measures in the area of conventional arms. Such measures have proved their efficacy over the years at the regional and subregional levels. They are significant in that they can lead to the creation of favourable conditions for the peaceful settlement of international disputes and facilitate the resolution of a situation that might lead to international tensions and friction.

Confidence-building measures have a special significance in the South Asian context. Without progress towards eliminating underlying disputes and causes of mistrust between States, the utility of confidence-building measures, however, will diminish. They can act as neither a substitute nor a precondition for steps towards the politically negotiated settlement of disputes. Pakistan supports the development of confidence-building measures in the area of conventional arms. That has remained one of the traditional items on the Disarmament Commission's agenda. The Pakistan delegation has contributed constructively to deliberations on that in the last decade and will continue to do so.

The challenges presented to the global security architecture and the disarmament agenda and machinery require a cooperative approach aimed at rebuilding the consensus agreed by all States at the first United Nations special session of the General Assembly on disarmament. For over a decade,

Pakistan has elaborated elements to revive such an international consensus. Even as we recognize that such an undertaking would be neither quick nor easy, the Commission, as a deliberative body with universal membership, can play an important role in evolving such a consensus. An important beginning to revive such a consensus was made last week when the Open-ended Working Group on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament met to consider the objectives and agenda of such a session. An early convening of that session holds the promise of overcoming the present impasse in the field of disarmament, revitalizing the role of the United Nations to promote global security and to respond to the aspirations of a world without nuclear weapons, other non-conventional and advanced conventional weapons.

Mr. Elshandawily (Egypt): I am taking the floor a second time to deliver a statement in my national capacity. I shall try to be brief.

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your election to preside over this year's substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC), as well as to express our appreciation for your efforts in this important forum. Likewise, I would like to extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau on their election and to commend Kazakhstan and Morocco for chairing the two UNDC Working Groups. Let me assure the Bureau of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I would also like to associate Egypt's position with the positions reflected in the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Group of African States.

This year is particularly important for the UNDC, as it comes after the unprecedented momentum and forthcoming results of the latest session of the First Committee, at the current seventieth session of the General Assembly. Therefore, a consensus on a substantive outcome is most important this year if we are to preserve the relevance of the UNDC to the multilateral machinery on disarmament, especially given the successive failures of past cycles of the Commission to adopt a draft report since 1999. We call upon the nuclear-weapon States and major arms exporters to display and demonstrate the necessary political will in order to reach a substantive outcome on the two important issues on the UNDC agenda and to enable the potential of the Commission to further the cause of disarmament.

Let me begin with Working Group 1, on recommendations for achieving the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The starting point in that regard should be the implementation of resolution 69/58, on the follow-up to the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament, held on 26 September 2013. The resolution continues to chart a road map towards the total elimination of all nuclear weapons. The UNDC should be ready to play its part in deliberating on the implementation of the road map, especially with regard to the elements of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use, and to provide for their destruction.

Egypt welcomes the continued momentum on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and the incompatibility of their use with international humanitarian law. We support the calls for the development of a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. In that regard, nuclear-weapon States bear a special responsibility for avoiding any possibility of what would be a catastrophe.

The universalization of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is an indispensable step towards achieving general and comprehensive nuclear disarmament. The speedy establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones adds impetus to efforts aimed at achieving the wider objective of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The international community has recognized the urgency of the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Yet despite those repeated calls and the overwhelming global support for the establishment of the zone, the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which is an integral and essential part of the package of decisions that enabled the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995, remains unfulfilled. The resolution remains valid until its objectives are achieved and therefore should be implemented without any further delay. The UNDC's session provides a timely opportunity to reiterate the commitment of the international community to bring the process back on track. It provides an adequate forum to reflect on how to break the current stalemate

and to restore the credibility and relevance of the NPT review process, if not the Treaty itself.

The deliberations of Working Group 2 of the UNDC on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons assume growing importance. By contributing to the debate on confidence-building measures, the UNDC will be helping to address areas of concern relating to conventional weapons, including the salient issue of illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons. We have consistently called for the following elements as integral components of any possible confidence-building measures: first, subjecting overproduction and the ever-increasing stockpiles of conventional weapons in the hands of major arms exporters and producers to international inspection; secondly, mutual international accountability as the only guarantee against potential abuse of the existing imbalance between major arms producers and the rest of the world; and, thirdly, addressing protracted threats to international peace and security. In that regard, there is no more profound threat to peace and security, to international law, international humanitarian law, human rights law and to the core principles of the Charter of the United Nations itself than the crimes of aggression and foreign occupation, which employ conventional arms arsenals to threaten and dominate peoples and deny them their most basic rights. By developing such confidence-building measures, the UNDC will be refining the traditional meaning of the term, thereby contributing conceptually to enhancing international peace, security and stability.

Egypt stands ready to contribute constructively to the deliberations so as to ensure a balanced outcome between the results of the two Working Groups, an outcome that reflects a balance between the interests of all States. We are confident in your ability, Mr. Chair, to steer the discussion towards a successful outcome of the cycle.

Ms. Wood (Australia): I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to chair the 2016 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). It is very positive for Australia to see our regional neighbour taking on this important role.

It is an honour to be given the opportunity to address the Commission on Australia's behalf.

The need for the UNDC to perform its core role as a deliberative body and a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly is more important now than ever, given the need to develop the debates from the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the First Committee into a positive path forward for disarmament. We must also bear in mind the ongoing discussions this year in the Open-ended Working Group on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament to consider the objectives and agenda for such a special session, in New York; the Open-ended Working Group's work to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons, in Geneva; and the conclusions from the recent Nuclear Security Summit, held in Washington, D.C.

A lot has been said about the polarization on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament issues following the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the session of the First Committee. But we must remember that there remains one common objective. The international community shares the overarching goal of a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons. States may differ on the means and sequencing for achieving that goal, but, ultimately, the international community should focus not on differences but on common ground, by identifying concrete and practical building blocks to reach that shared goal.

With the addition of Norway today, Australia, along with 24 countries, is pleased to submit a progressive approach paper to the UNDC. The paper underlines the reality that there are no quick fixes, given that our goal is effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament. Only by addressing both the security and the humanitarian dimensions of nuclear weapons can we take the incremental but necessary steps that will enhance security for all and provide the best chance of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. Any process that can effectively lead us to a world free of nuclear weapons will, by necessity, be an inclusive one. Both Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty non-nuclear-weapon States and nuclear-weapon States have critical and cooperative roles to play in that regard. Moreover, in order to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, not only the five nuclear-weapon States under the NPT but all States that possess nuclear weapons will need to be involved.

The progressive approach paper acknowledges many of the central elements of the draft paper put

forward by Kazakhstan as the Chair of Working Group 1. Those include the critical need to bring into force the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and to begin negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty; encouraging greater transparency from the nuclear-weapon States; reducing the risk of the accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons; revitalizing the disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament; strengthening nuclear-weapon-free zones; underlining the necessity of further negotiations between the nuclear-weapon States, whether bilateral, plurilateral or multilateral, to reduce arsenals; and the important role of disarmament education.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the opening of the CTBT for signature. The Treaty has been a very successful instrument of international cooperation, effectively establishing a global norm against testing. However, voluntary moratoriums on nuclear-test explosions are no substitute for a permanent and legally binding commitment to end nuclear testing and all other nuclear explosions. That can be achieved only through the entry into force of the Treaty.

With regard to conventional weapons, it is important to recognize key developments, including the convening last year of the first Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Australia continues to work towards the universalization of the ATT. We welcome Greece, Lesotho and Peru as the newest member States. Australia will continue to work closely with States in our own region, the Indo-Pacific, to enable understanding of the ATT and encourage further signatories and ratifications.

The sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held in June, will be a useful opportunity for Member States to consider synergies among States on the Small Arms and Light Weapons Programme of Action and the Arms Trade Treaty. Australia has been a solid supporter of practical measures to regulate the trade in conventional weapons, and we will continue to assist States to adhere to and implement well-targeted and workable measures.

We look forward to actively contributing to the discussions ahead.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazahkistan): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your leadership and to express my full support. I also thank the members of the Bureau and staff of the Secretariat for their most committed services the current and previous sessions. My delegation wishes to acknowledge its most grateful appreciation to the High Representative, His Excellency Mr. Kim Won-soo, and his very able team for their outstanding stewardship and for the great support given to Kazakhstan in its advocacy for disarmament.

There is no doubt that we must break the stalemate of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC), dating back to 1999, and revitalize the effectiveness of the disarmament machinery. We should address the numerous new threats encountered today and also improve the working methods of the UNDC to consolidate past successes and respond to changing political situations and challenges. We note with deep regret that entities of the disarmament machinery have not executed their mandates for the past two decades. We hope that such a situation will soon change. Therefore, permit me to present various bold and innovative measures to achieve our desired objectives for a safe and secure world.

On nuclear issues, my delegation would like to elaborate the following. Kazakhstan has been fully committed to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and nuclear security from the very first days of its independence. The threat of the use of nuclear weapons by State and non-State actors remains the main challenge that humankind faces today. We should therefore use every opportunity to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. We recognize the key role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as the main international structure responsible for the elaboration of goals and principles, and commend it for uniting international efforts in ensuring nuclear security.

However, the Nuclear Security Summits also contribute significantly and support the IAEA in accomplishing that common goal. Our President has participated in all four Summits, and we commend the Government of the United States and President Barack Obama for their initiative to launch the Summit process. We are confident that implementing the recommendations adopted at the consecutive Summits held in Washington, D.C, Seoul, The Hague and the again in Washington, D.C., last week will greatly increase nuclear security worldwide. We will spare no efforts to realize them.

One of the key aspects of our leadership at the fourth Summit was the position that, despite the

considerable progress made as outcomes of the Summits, the objectives set up in the framework of this initiative, generally speaking, are not fully implemented. It is therefore necessary to consider continuing the Summits to further reduce nuclear-security threats. Accordingly, at last week's Summit, Kazakhstan presented a fundamentally new document entitled "Manifesto: The World. The Twenty-First Century". It expresses a momentous stance on issues of war and peace, particularly, above all, the threat of a nuclear apocalypse in the event of the failure of the international community to promote and advance a total ban on nuclear weapons. I believe that the document will be made available to delegations through PaperSmart or other means of communication.

Speaking at the General Assembly at its seventieth session this past September, President Nursultan A. Nazarbayev urged the international community

> "that a world without nuclear weapons should become the main goal of humankind for the twenty-first century." (*A/70/PV.13, p. 47*).

Kazakhstan therefore introduced resolution 70/57, entitled "Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World", which was adopted on 7 December 2015 and which the majority of States Members of the United Nations supported, to which we express our gratitude. It outlines the basic principles and objectives of nuclear disarmament and urges that bold steps be taken, including the adoption of a legally binding international instrument to prohibit and destroy all nuclear weapons. My country therefore calls for the establishment of a global anti-nuclear movement aimed at nuclear disarmament.

Given the need to take additional steps to discuss issues of nuclear disarmament, Kazakhstan has supported the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group to advance the process of multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament and has participated in its meetings. We believe that entity is not an alternative to the Conference on Disarmament (CD) or the UNDC. However, the Working Group enjoys an absolute majority of supporters, and therefore its potential cannot be ignored. We call on the nuclear-weapon States to participate in that dialogue.

We will also work for the conclusion of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons that would prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons irreversibly and verifiably and within a specific time frame. We also support the initiative to conclude a treaty banning nuclear weapons. However, a simple ban is not enough for nuclear disarmament; an integrated approach is needed. We therefore support the initiative of building bridges among the different views on nuclear disarmament.

My country stands for an early start on the development of a treaty banning the production of fissile material in order to make the disarmament process irreversible and minimize the possibility of weapons-grade material falling into the hands of terrorists. That should not be a condition for the start of negotiations in the CD, and therefore we support the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts for the preparation of negotiations on the proposed fissile material cut-off treaty, in which our expert participated. The recommendations of the Group serve as a sound tool for future substantive deliberations.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones cover the entire southern hemisphere. The 116 States membe s of such zones represent the majority of States Members of the United Nations. We support expanding such zones in the future, particularly by the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons. We support the proposal to hold annual meetings in New York of representatives of all the nuclear-weapon-free zones. My delegation is pleased to inform members that the Protocol to the Semipalatinsk Treaty, signed by the representatives of the five nuclear-weapon countries in 2014, has already been ratified by the United Kingdom, China, Russia and France. We look forward to the early completion of that work by the United States.

My Government condemns the nuclear tests and launching of ballistic missiles conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea this year. We therefore co-sponsored Security Council resolution 2270 (2016), adopted on 2 March. At the recent Nuclear Security Summit held in Washington, D.C., in their capacity as the current co-Presidents of the Conference on Facilitating Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan issued a joint statement condemning the nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. They also called for the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and also for urgent measures to denuclearize the Korean peninsula.

On 27 August 2015, the IAEA and Kazakhstan signed an agreement to set up the IAEA Low Enriched Uranium Bank in Kazakhstan. The Bank, which is operated by Kazakhstan, will be a physical reserve of low enriched uranium available to eligible IAEA member States. The establishment of the Bank will contribute to guaranteeing non-discriminatory access to nuclear fuel and to strengthening the non-proliferation regime, thereby reducing nuclear risks.

Given the time constraints, let me reflect on a few more items on our agenda, including on non-nuclear issues where we also have several key considerations.

Earlier this year, we witnessed the completion of the destruction of all chemical weapons exported from Syria in accordance with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Yet we are concerned that terrorists could possibly use chemical weapons or chemical products in Syria. In that regard, we see the relevance of the Russian initiative for concluding an international convention for the suppression of acts of chemical terrorism.

The eighth Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons this year will be an opportunity to take important decisions to further strengthen the Convention. In June, Astana will host a regional seminar for the Eastern European region on the preparations for the Review Conference. In addition, it is imperative that the fifth Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), to be held this year, come up with concrete solutions. Kazakhstan is a signatory to the CCW and its Protocols I, III and IV, and has decided to accede to Protocols II and V.

We participated in last year's experts meetings on lethal autonomous weapon systems, held under the auspices of the CCW, and we will also be engaged in experts meetings this April in Geneva. We believe that the banning of such systems is possible only under comprehensive and strict control.

Kazakhstan has decided to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty and is currently undertaking the relevant domestic procedures.

We fully support the sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects. We must truly put a halt to the illegal trading in such weapons, which kill 2,000 innocent civilians every day. We call on Member States to submit regular reports to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and to support the International Tracing Instrument, so to strengthen those invaluable tools to monitor the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Peace is necessary for development, and vice versa, in a globalized and interconnected world in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). Disarmament and non-proliferation must therefore move in parallel with other global processes, such as those involving poverty reduction, inclusive development, the rule of law, climate change and other issues. In that regard, one of the building blocks to a secure world is Kazakhstan's initiative whereby every country would transfer 1 per cent of its defence budget to the Sustainable Development Goals Fund. Hence, we are deeply concerned about the decision of a number of leading countries to spend massive funds to modernize their nuclear arsenals.

United Nations system-wide efforts and regional efforts on official development assistance, as well as international organizations and civil society, also contribute to the concept of One United Nations, combining development with arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation initiatives at the country, subregional and regional levels, thereby enhancing overall global security.

My country is committed to fully assisting in breaking the deadlock in the disarmament machinery to make it viable again for our collective peace and stability.

Mr. Varma (India): The Indian delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your election as the Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its 2016 session and assures you of our full cooperation. We would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their elections. We convey our appreciation to the Chairs of the two Working Groups, Mr. Kairat Abdrakhmanov of Kazakhstan and Mr. Bouchaib Eloumni of Morocco, for their diligent efforts last year and during the intersessional period. We would like to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for his important statement today, especially his

emphasis on the need for the UNDC to move forward, particularly on making progress on a third agenda item.

We associate ourselves with the statement made by representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Disarmament Commission — the only body with universal membership and the specialized deliberative leg of the triad of the disarmament machinery put in place by the final document of the General Assembly's first special session on disarmament (resolution S-10/2) — has had past successes in adopting guidelines and recommendations. While we share the widespread disappointment at the UNDC's inability to adopt consensus guidelines since 1999, in our view the current difficulties relate less to any inherent deficiencies in the machinery and more to the lack of political will on the part of Member States to invest in multilateral outcomes.

As a platform for dialogue and cooperation, the Commission can play an important role in reducing tensions and building confidence, provided that Member States start investing in this forum. That is not to deny that the Commission could do more to improve its functioning by undertaking focused and results-oriented discussions on the items on its agenda. We feel that a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament is the appropriate forum to undertake a full and comprehensive review of the disarmament machinery.

Addressing the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C., last week, Prime Minister Modi underlined that India remained committed to global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. India supports the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, which is part of our commitment to combat climate change. Nuclear security will be a continuing priority for India.

India attaches priority to global, non-discriminatory, verifiable nuclear disarmament and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons in a time-bound manner. India believes there is a need to uphold genuine multilateralism to increase trust and confidence among all States, both nuclear and non-nuclear, and to strengthen dialogue in order to close the gaps both on the constitution and expression of international will with regard to the pursuit of negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament. As such, India has supported the proposal put forward by the Non-Aligned Movement for the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons. We have also called for a reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment by all nuclear-weapon States to the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and an agreement on a step-by-step process, underwritten by a universal commitment for the global elimination of nuclear weapons. India has also called for meaningful dialogue among all the nuclear-weapon States to build trust and confidence and for reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs and security doctrines.

India's draft resolutions in the First Committee — on a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons and on reducing nuclear dangers — have received support from a large of Member States. Without prejudice to the priority attached to nuclear disarmament, India has also supported the commencement of negotiations of a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament, on the basis of the agreed mandate. India also supported resolution 70/57, sponsored by Kazakhstan, entitled "Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World", the only nuclear-weapon State to do so.

On practical confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the field of conventional weapons, the other agenda item before the UNDC, in the past the Commission has in the past contributed valuable guidelines in that field. There is merit in building on the useful discussions last year with a view to bridging the remaining gaps. In our view, confidence-building must be a step-by-step process and should evolve at a pace comfortable for all participating States. CBMs should be adopted on the initiation and with the agreement of the States concerned. In elaborating practical CBMs in the area of conventional weapons, we could take advantage of the UNDC guidelines on CBMs, endorsed by the General Assembly at its forty-first session.

We support the UNDC seeking inputs on specific topics of common interest to our agenda from the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and in providing adequate resources for UNIDIR in preparing such studies.

On the issue of a possible third agenda item, to which the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs referred in his statement, at its sixty-ninth session the General Assembly mandated the Commission to keep in mind the proposal to include a third item on the 2015

agenda. While our priority remains the agenda item on nuclear disarmament, we will not stand in the way of reaching consensus on a third item, especially if it has the potential to expand the space for consensus-building and help the international community respond in a meaningful manner to the new and emerging challenges relevant to the disarmament agenda.

Since this is the second year of the current triennial cycle, our deliberations will be important in laying the foundation for adopting substantive recommendations at the conclusion of the cycle next year. We look forward to an in-depth exchange of views on all aspects related to the two agenda items. You, Sir, can rest assured of the full support and cooperation of the Indian delegation.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) at its 2016 session. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

Libya associates itself with the statements made, respectively, by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Group of African States and by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

The Disarmament Commission is one of the oldest components of the United Nations disarmament machinery. It was established as a deliberative body to deal with multilateral disarmament issues. Over the years, the Commission has successfully drafted a number of guidelines and recommendations and reached consensus on a variety of vital issues. However, the Commission has been in a stalemate for over a decade, which might be the result of the prevailing lack of trust, flexibility and the necessary political will on the part of Member States. Libya looks forward to a change in the status quo so that we can achieve tangible successes during this session.

Despite the efforts made over the past decades in disarmament, the danger that nuclear weapons might be used still exists. Undoubtedly, nuclear disarmament remains a major priority and a multilateral political commitment. Banning nuclear weapons and their disposal by reaching a legally binding agreement to that end is the only and most assured safeguard against their use or threat of use. In that regard, Libya expresses its deep concern about the lack of progress in implementing the commitments on nuclear disarmament and about the failure of the nuclear-weapon States to meet their obligations to fully eradicate arsenals, weapons or systems of delivery, according to their legal commitments, in line with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the obligations of nuclear disarmament provided for in the 1995, 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences. We underline the need for those obligations and commitments to remain in force until they are fully implemented.

Establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, particularly in the Middle East, is one of the priority themes that would greatly contribute to achieving full nuclear disarmament. A glimpse of hope surfaced through the success achieved in the 2010 NPT Review Conference, when a final document was adopted, particularly the part dedicated to supporting the implementation of the 1995 resolution on establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. However, disappointments accumulated one after the other, starting with the failure to convene a conference on the issue in 2012, to the disappointment at the outcome of the NPT Review Conference last year. In that regard, we recall that the NPT is based on a deal between the nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States. The latter pledged that they would not attempt to acquire nuclear weapons, while the former pledged to seriously try to eradicate and dispose of their nuclear arsenals. However, the shortfall in that equation, the ongoing stalemate and the failure to achieve any tangible progress on nuclear disarmament leads non-nuclear-weapon States to raise questions with regard to the seriousness and effectiveness of the NPT. That might drive them to reconsider new policies in finding alternatives that would achieve and safeguard security for all nations.

Libya expresses its deep concern owing to the catastrophic humanitarian impact resulting from the use of nuclear weapons. We stress the need for all countries to comply with international law, including international humanitarian law. Libya underscores the need and importance of starting negotiations to reach a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons that bans their acquisition, modernization, production, possession, testing, stockpiling, transfer and use or threat of their use. Such a convention should also provide for their destruction through a legally binding international agreement.

The measures aimed at building trust in the field of conventional weapons should not be an alternative to disarmament measures or a precondition thereto. They should be an element in establishing an environment conducive to enabling us to achieve progress on disarmament. Libya supports all practical measures for building trust with regard to conventional weapons, as they would promote transparency and provide the necessary environment to achieve development and progress on disarmament.

Libya also believes that confidence-building measures are a means to enhance international peace and stability. Such measures should be voluntary and based on consensus among all countries participating, in a manner that is sensitive to their gradual implementation and safeguarding the security of countries. In that context, Libya underscores the right of countries to the acquire, manufacture, export, import or maintain conventional weapons, their parts and components for self-defence and ensuring their security under the Charter of the United Nations. We call for the implementation of the relevant convention in a balanced and neutral manner, while safeguarding and protecting the interests of all countries — not only exporting and manufacturing countries.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): First of all, allow me to start by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship. You and all the members of the Bureau can be assured of my delegation's full support.

Croatia remains an active supporter of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). However, to say at the opening of the second substantive session of the current three-year UNDC cycle that we have high expectations from our meetings would be an overstatement. We hope that we will be proved wrong, but the fact of the matter is that the UNDC remains in a deadlock that appears increasingly difficult to break with every year that passes. That adds to the continuous decline in its relevance and the overall decrease in the trust that the Member States have in its capacity to address today's disarmament-related challenges in a significant manner.

However, we do not want to imply that the UNDC has lost its meaning and place in the overall United Nations system. On the contrary, with its universal membership and consensus-based decision-making, the UNDC remains a body with untapped potential. But the problem with which the UNDC is faced goes beyond its operational scope. The United Nations disarmament machinery is plagued by an absence of progress and by divergent views on several important matters, with little or no prospect for middle ground for the foreseeable future. That is a problem that calls for in-depth reflection and, if need be, new creative thinking.

While chairing the Commission two years ago, and acting as a friend of the Chair the year after that, Croatia invested no small amount of time and diplomatic energy to find avenues that would enable a way forward. One cannot say that we were particularly successful. Nevertheless, we shall continue advocating the full implementation of General Assembly resolution 69/77 in the same diligent manner and with particular emphasis on more focused agenda items. Croatia continues to see the merit of pursuing a more creative approach to the agenda. We strongly believe that, through the inclusion of a third agenda item, deliberations would be uplifted and new, highly needed ground for potential success would be carved out.

It seems that a third agenda item — possibly on the matter of outer space — might be within our grasp, and we should spare no effort to seize it.

We also encourage the Commission to make meaningful use during its substantive sessions of the expertise of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

The United Nations disarmament machinery, including the UNDC, should serve as an important tool for advancement in resolving issues related to nuclear disarmament. It is no secret that the main reason for the unproductive status quo is precisely the nuclear portfolio. Regardless of the tremendous efforts invested, including during the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the final result fell short of the desired one.

We are of the opinion that a process that can effectively lead us to a world free of nuclear weapons can only be an inclusive one. It must leverage the existing global regime, in particular the NPT. The Treaty provides us with the necessary foundation, including its previous consensus-based documents such as the 2010 NPT Action Plan, and treaty-level commitments on the goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons, including as outlined in article VI.

In our opinion, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing processes. Strengthening the non-proliferation regime on nuclear weapons is an essential prerequisite for a future without nuclear weapons. Another example is securing the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which will reinforce the global norm against nuclear testing, but will also advance key disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

Due attention should also be given to the efforts to establish a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. New impetus and creative ideas are called for to bring all the relevant parties to the table, with full respect for their legitimate interests. That is essential not only for the long-term strategic stability of the Middle East and beyond, but also for unlocking parts of the blocked United Nations disarmament machinery, including the UNDC.

Croatia values the role and importance of practical confidence-building measures in the area of conventional weapons. Such measures play an important role in promoting understanding, transparency and cooperation among States, and therefore in enhancing and maintaining regional and international peace, stability and security.

Traditionally, Croatia has been actively engaged in global humanitarian disarmament. We attach great importance to the conventions prohibiting anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions. Last year, Croatia hosted the first Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and we view its successful outcome with great pride. We also introduced the draft resolution on the same topic, which the Generally Assembly successfully adopted as resolution 70/54. Furthermore, we wish to underline the significance of the first legally binding instrument on the arms trade, which addresses the illicit and non-regulated trade in arms, thereby making a great contribution to the worldwide prevention of armed conflict, violence and violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that we should make every effort to fulfil the UNDC's mandate. In that regard, we are willing to work and do our best to reverse the current unfortunate trend and finally reach the consensus that will lead to the submission of relevant recommendations and guidelines to the General Assembly. The United Nations Disarmament Commission's deliberations, guidelines and recommendations have the potential to result in concrete actions and to make a difference in the world by tackling extremely complex security challenges. By failing to reach consensus or to fulfil the Commission's mandate, we will be at a serious loss. There is too much at stake. After all, it is a matter of our collective security.

Mr. Ilichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to congratulate the Chair on his election to this important post and to wish him every success in his important work.

The Russian Federation has been a strong advocate of a comprehensive multilateral approach to addressing disarmament issues, provided that the principles of strategic stability and equal and indivisible security for all are met. The United Nations is designed to play a central role in international efforts to ensure global stability and to counter new challenges and threats.

The United Nations disarmament machinery, set up almost 40 years ago, enjoys all the necessary authority and tools to address issues in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. That is particularly true for the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC), which we consider to be a unique international forum that enables an open and equal dialogue among all States interested in adapting the fundamental disarmament principles to the current situation and elaborating recommendations with respect to new disarmament arrangements. It is important for every UNDC member State to be confident that its voice is being heard.

Unfortunately, the Commission has not avoided those problems that are characteristic of the United Nations disarmament triad, which are due mostly to objective contradictions in States's approaches. Any reference to allegedly outdated methods of work is nothing more than a mere pretext and a smokescreen for an unwillingness to seek acceptable compromises. The Commission has functioned successfully for several decades under the current rules of procedure. We are convinced that any departure from the consensus rule, which is crucial for the multilateral arms-control negotiations process, would be fraught with harmful consequences for international security.

We believe that the agenda adopted at the Commission's substantive session last year will be effective for the entire three-year cycle. However, we

do not think that we have exhausted all possibilities for approving the agenda based on compromises acceptable to everybody. If discussions about the inclusion of an additional third item continue, we are prepared to offer our suggestions.

The complexity of the problems that the international community is facing affects the state of play in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. We welcome the fact that the majority of States strive for compromise, which allows us to move to safely secure global and regional stability.

We are firmly committed to our obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We regret the fact that, because of the position of three States — namely, the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada — the 2015 NPT Review Conference did not succeed in adopting a final document. From our perspective, that turn of events seriously exacerbated the negative trends associated with the Treaty. A principal trend in that regard was the fostering of inflated expectations, and sometimes demands, in the field of nuclear disarmament that are beyond the means and resources available to nuclear-weapon States. The basics of the Treaty would be undermined and its credibility compromised if antagonism along these lines or on other issues continues.

Recently, we have been witnessing increasingly frequent calls for the prompt elaboration of a new international legal instrument that would regulate the practical aspects of reaching a global nuclear zero. Undoubtedly the issue is important, but the appropriate NPT provisions have not been taken into account. The Treaty's preamble and its article VI clearly state that the complete elimination of nuclear arsenals is to be carried out in accordance with a treaty on general and complete disarmament. Over recent decades, those provisions have inexplicably been ignored, despite the fact that they are legally binding for all NPT member States. Therefore, we regard redressing the historical truth on the issue to be an important dimension of our efforts in the framework of the new review cycle.

We would also like to draw the Commission's attention to the fact that, despite an unprecedented reduction in nuclear arsenals by Russia and the United States, other nuclear-weapon States for some reason remain on the sidelines. However, their aggregate nuclear capabilities are currently comparable to the threshold that Russia is obliged to attain under the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. We believe that meeting those obligations would exhaust our ability to make bilateral reductions with the United States. Therefore, we need to seek possible ways of getting other States with nuclear military capabilities on board.

On a separate note, I would like to say a few words about the so-called humanitarian concepts in the field of nuclear disarmament. In our view, the main danger they bring is in sending the wrong message. For some reason, instead of strengthening international security and stability, they present humanitarian standards as a core task of nuclear disarmament. This interpretation takes the issue of nuclear disarmament out of its historical, strategic and legal contexts. It discredits the principle of deterrence and presents a time-tested and responsible policy of the nuclear-weapon States in the field of security as illegitimate and contrary to the common interests and aspirations of humankind.

Prioritizing humanitarian considerations is dangerous also because it diverts the attention of the international community from much more pressing issues in the field of international security and stability, such as the deployment of United States/NATO missile defence, the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and the development of long-range, high-precision weapons, inter alia. In other words, we are putting on a back burner both those issues that are critically important for upholding strategic stability, and also those types of weapons that determine the capacity of States to unleash and wage wars.

Further discussions on the prospects for nuclear disarmament should strive to keep the NPT as one of the pillars of the international security system, and not undermine it. We support establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, which will undoubtedly bring us closer to a world without nuclear weapons. We regard establishing such zones as an important and efficient way of strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The Russian Federation stands ready to promptly sign a protocol to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone.

Despite the fact that the 2015 NPT Review Conference failed to adopt concrete decisions on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East,

the implementation of 1995 resolution on the Middle East remains on the international agenda. Russia is prepared to make every effort to ensure its implementation and to promote a regional dialogue on the issue.

We are responsible in implementing our obligations under article VI of the NPT. This has been proved by the considerable results we have already achieved. We stopped the nuclear arms race a long time ago. Moreover, for the third decade now, we have consistently carried out a phased reduction of our nuclear arsenals. Russia is ready to have a very serious discussion on nuclear disarmament.

By the same token, there must be no inflated expectations. Further steps in the field of nuclear disarmament are impossible unless serious and comprehensive preparatory work is done by all interested parties, first and foremost all those States that have a military nuclear capability. First of all, it is essential that any attempts to apply double standards in international affairs be avoided. The fundamental principle of strengthening strategic stability and equal and indivisible security for all States should serve as a basis for the development of international relations.

In the current international situation, unfortunately, we see the very opposite trend. Our Western partners continue to push the situation in the area of anti-ballistic missiles to the point of no return. The construction of the United States anti-missile base in Romania is almost completed. Four United States navy destroyers with anti-missile capability have been relocated to the Rota Naval Base in Spain. A new phase has begun with another United States anti-ballistic base to be built in Poland, with high-precision interceptor missiles to be added to its arsenal.

Notably, the achievement of agreements on the Iranian nuclear programme and, as a consequence, the elimination of the crucial argument that justifies the deployment of missile defence system in no way affected United States-NATO missile defence plans. From that we conclude that the real purpose of the United States global missile defence system is aimed, first and foremost, at the Russian nuclear forces.

The United States anti-ballistic defence missile system known as the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defence, which is to be deployed on the territory of the Republic of Korea, is a new destabilizing factor in the Asia-Pacific region. The deployment of this system can only exacerbate the existing problems on the peninsula.

In Europe there are still United States nuclear weapons capable of reaching Russian territory. Moreover, such systems are currently being modernized. NATO has been carrying out joint planning for nuclear strikes, and training is being conducted in which they train the armed forces of non-nuclear States to prepare and use non-strategic nuclear weapons. We believe that that situation can have one solution, namely, the repatriation of all non-nuclear weapons to the national territory of the possessor, a ban on their placement abroad and the elimination of infrastructure that ensures their rapid deployment. The United States concept of a "global strike" and the unwillingness to refuse to deploy weapons in space bring with them an enormous potential for destruction.

Unfortunately, it is almost 20 years now since the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and it has yet to come into force. That is a serious reason to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the situation regarding the CTBT and to make additional efforts to ensure that positive shifts occur during its anniversary year.

With regard to conventional weapons, the conventional arms-control regime in Europe has already become outdated, whereas a new agreement to succeed it as a more up-to-date instrument has yet to materialize. The international community is well aware of our readiness to proceed to substantive discussions on a new regime for a treaty on conventional armed forces in Europe, as soon as NATO demonstrates a serious approach to the issue and comes up with relevant ideas and presents its proposals. The international community is well aware of our readiness to proceed to substantive discussions on a new regime for a treaty on conventional armed forces in Europe, as soon as NATO shows that it is willing to undertake a serious approach to the issue, comes up with and presents relevant ideas and proposals. But currently we are just seeing a progressive implementation of the decisions of the 2014 Wales NATO Summit, which are clearly anti-Russian, and, at the same time, they have frozen military cooperation in the Russia-NATO council.

However, we are prepared to discuss new constructive ideas on arms control with regard to conventional weapons within the UNDC and other such platforms.

In conclusion, we believe that even a cursory review of the urgent tasks on arms control, disarmament and

non-proliferation confirms the relevance of our dialogue in the Disarmament Commission, on the basis of the existing mandate and verified principles of consensus, thereby allowing for optimal and acceptable results for all. The effectiveness of the Disarmament Commission does not depend on some ephemeral transformations, but on specific practical contributions from each State.

Mr. Sun Lei (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at the current session. I am confident that, with your rich experience and wisdom, you will steer this session to positive outcomes. I would like to assure you, Sir, of our full cooperation. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Seck of Senegal, and the other two Vice-Chairs for the outstanding work during the previous session.

At present, human society has increasingly become a community of integrated interests and a shared future. Meanwhile, the world is still not tranquil, with lingering wars, turbulence and increasing non-traditional security threats, such as terrorism, extremism, epidemics and cybersecurity issues. The maintenance of international security is an arduous task.

Under the new circumstances, all countries should follow the trend of the times, embrace peace and development, abandon the Cold War mentality and zero-sum-game theory, and instead foster a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, advance global security governance in a coordinated way and develop a new, win-win approach to security that is observed, shared and maintained by all.

China believes that nuclear disarmament should be promoted in a step-by-step manner, with universal security as the guiding principle and strategic stability as the basic guarantee, while making full use of existing mechanisms as an important platform. The principle of undiminished security for all must be upheld in transparency measures. At the same time, countries with the largest nuclear arsenals bear special and the main responsibilities for nuclear disarmament, and they should continue to drastically reduce their nuclear stockpiles through verifiable and irreversible means to create conditions for the ultimate achievement of complete nuclear disarmament.

We are opposed to the proliferation of nuclear weapons in any form, and we support the efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones. We are resolutely opposed to the proliferation of nuclear weapons in any form and are working for a diplomatic resolution to regional hot-spot nuclear issues. China welcomes the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action concluded by the P5+1 and Iran, which contributes to safeguarding the international non-proliferation regime, promotes peace and stability in the Middle East region and provides valuable experience to resolve major disputes through negotiations.

At present, the situation on the Korean peninsula is complex and sensitive. We hope that all parties concerned will stay on course towards dialogue and consultation in search of a solution, work together for the early resumption of the Six-Party Talks and pursue a dual-track parallel approach that includes denuclearization and replacing the 1953 Korean War Armistice Agreement with a peace agreement. China stands ready to work with the international community towards the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the building of a peaceful and stable Korean Peninsula.

China actively participates in global nuclear governance by staunchly supporting the nuclear disarmament process, firmly upholding the nuclear non-proliferation regime and actively promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, thereby making its important and unique contribution to the endeavour of promoting international peace and security. The fourth Nuclear Security Summit has just concluded. Chinese President Xi Jinping was invited to attend the Summit, where he delivered a keynote speech in which he comprehensively expounded on China's policies and proposals, introduced China's new measures and achievements in the field of nuclear security and put forward substantial initiatives to strengthen global nuclear security.

China has always supported practical and feasible confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms control and has made continuous efforts to promote related international and regional disarmament processes. China has been an active participant in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and in the reporting mechanism on transparency in military expenditures. A Group of Governmental Experts on the Register of Conventional Arms will meet later this year to review the Register's operations and development.

To improve the scope and universal application of the Register, my country considers it urgent to increase the number of participating countries.

We attach great importance to the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. China has been earnestly implementing the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In that regard, China has adopted a series of measures on legislation, law enforcement, capacity-building, international exchanges and cooperation, which have achieved remarkable results. China will actively participate in the upcoming sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, in which we hope to achieve positive results.

China supports the international community in taking the necessary measures to regulate the international conventional arms trade and in combating the illicit transfer and trafficking in conventional arms. China constructively participated in the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) negotiation process and is currently looking into the issue of acceding to the ATT. China is ready to strengthen cooperation with all parties with a view to building a regulated and reasonable arms trade order.

China attaches great importance to, and actively participates in, the ongoing discussions about lethal autonomous weapon systems. We are of the view that the international community should intensively study and properly address the relevant concerns on the basis of comprehensive and inclusive discussions.

We are open to the addition of a third item on the agenda and are willing to participate and work together with all the parties concerned.

The issue of arms control and disarmament has a bearing on international security. All countries have the responsibility and obligation to make joint efforts to promote the process of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation and to contribute to the maintenance of the universal security of humankind. As a unique deliberative body, the Disarmament Commission has played an important role in setting the priority agenda for multilateral disarmament negotiations. In recent years, the multilateral disarmament machinery, including the Disarmament Commission, has been confronted with difficulties. China hopes that all parties will work together to make positive progress the current review cycle.

In September 2015, President Xi Jinping announced that China would reduce its troops by 300,000, which is a demonstration of China's sincerity and its aspiration to join hands with the rest of the world to maintain peace and to pursue development and shared prosperity. China is willing to work with other countries in the effort to uphold world peace and stability and to advance the multilateral arms-control and disarmament process.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.